
He was, even to his good friend David Davis, "the most reticent, secretive man I ever saw or expect to see." And Leonard Swett stated: "He told all that was unimportant with a gushing frankness, yet no man kept his real purposes closer." After the opening of the vast Robert Todd Lincoln Collection in 1947 and the publication of a definitive edition of Abraham Lincoln's works in 1953, President Lincoln's "real purposes" remain so sufficiently hidden that he can be at once the touchstone for Lowell Weicker's and for Richard Nixon's views of proper presidential behavior. It would be asking too much of this volume's several hundred Lincoln "finds" of the last twenty-one years that they reveal those long sought "real purposes" and dispel the reticence and secrecy.

As President Gerald R. Ford seeks every opportunity to dust off Lincoln portraits and sit under them for photographs and as television warms up for the Revolution's bicentennial with a series of specials on the only president who quashed an American revolution, one is reminded that the efforts to understand Lincoln must go on. Roy P. Basler has spent his life trying to aid that effort. His edition of The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln (8 vols., 1953) is the basis of all current Lincoln scholarship, and it is the rarest of occasions when a historian questions Basler's judgment in dating or verifying a Lincoln text.

Read in isolation, the Supplement gives a somewhat distorted picture of Lincoln. He seems overly preoccupied with Yankee inventions only because this volume publishes the letters uncovered by Robert V. Bruce's research for Lincoln and the Tools of War (1956). He seems extraordinarily consumed with the "same everlasting subject—that of filling offices" (p. 6) only because the more statesmanlike speeches

1 The quotation by David Davis is taken from Willard L. King, Lincoln's Manager: David Davis (Cambridge, 1960), 232. The statement by Leonard Swett can be found in Paul M. Angle, ed., Herndon's Life of Lincoln (Cleveland, 1965), 432.
and letters have long ago been published, and all that is left are administrative fragments. 

Read as it should be, the Supplement fills in gaps in the previous eight volumes and solves a few problems. The more perplexing ones remain. Was Lincoln, for example, a humanitarian liberal who risked the nation’s existence for the black man’s freedom, or was he Edmund Wilson’s prophet of the Union as religious mysticism, an ambitious frontier Carlyle who admired the hero in history? Basler features as his frontispiece a remarkable letter to Charles Sumner filled with humanitarianism and concern for legality: “The bearer of this is the widow of Major Booth, who fell at Fort-Pillow. She makes a point, which I think very worthy of consideration which is, widows and children in fact, of colored soldiers who fall in our service, be placed in law, the same as if their marriages were legal, so that they can have the benefit of the provisions made the widows & orphans of white soldiers” (p. 243). Present also is Lincoln’s thank you note to Charles Janeway Stillé, whose pamphlet How a Free People Conduct a Long War Lincoln found “the best production upon the subject it treats which I have seen” (p. 171) and which George M. Fredrickson finds remarkable for its admiration of monarchy and its worship of force! Puzzles remain, but the road to understanding begins with Basler’s masterful editions of Lincoln's works.

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Whenever one undertakes a study of the history of the United States Army, the aspect most difficult to cover, in many ways, has been the Indian wars during the thirty-five years after the Civil War. A great amount of material has been available, but accounts have tended to be one sided, incomplete, incorrect, and biased. It has seemed that many of those who have set out to write about the army and the